

FROM THE ARMY ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE

Aviation's Pivotal Role In The Army's Transformation

In our lifetime, aviation has removed the barriers of space and time. We are no longer limited to two-dimensional mobility or restricted by the speed of our legs, horses, wheels, or tracks. Aviation provides us with remarkable capabilities across the full spectrum of operations. That is why it is at the heart of the Army's transformation process—increasing lethality and survivability of the total force, providing unrestricted mobility into and within the theater of operations, and providing unprecedented situational awareness and battlespace integration.

As the Army transforms into the objective force, aviation's inherent qualities of responsiveness, deployability, agility, versatility, survivability, and sustainability will become even more important. Vertical maneuver and envelopment will enable the future combined-arms organization to negate the effects of terrain and to conduct simultaneous operations at multiple locations, maneuver rapidly, and mass precision direct fires on enemy positions. These are critical capabilities on nonlinear battlefields and in urban and complex operational environments.

As part of our full-spectrum force, Army aviation will exploit emerging technologies to enhance its existing overmatch capabilities. Its principal and enduring missions—armed reconnaissance and attack, vertical lift, and support—will be executed by a restructured organization operating both legacy platforms and newly developed systems.

Space-based and aviation assets will contribute enormously to situational awareness. We will know where the enemy is, and we will make contact on our own terms. For example, with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) patrolling an area, our attack aircraft can remain in a hidden position out of harm's way. Once a target is identified, the information will pass via datalink from our UAV to the aircraft. The pilot then either engages the target or passes the information to another platform. The enemy won't know what hit him.

The RAH-66 Comanche will be the Army's future armed reconnaissance and attack aircraft. It will provide aerial reconnaissance with improved onboard sensors and connectivity to other sensors. It will possess enhanced digital connectivity for situational awareness, meet the operational range requirements for deep operations, and perform the attack mission for the objective force.

The AH-64D Apache Longbow remains the world's premier attack helicopter and guarantees the Army's ability to maintain combat overmatch in the interim force. The increased capabilities of Longbow provide early detection, target engagement, and precision kill at standoff ranges. The Apache's lineage, evident in the "A" model, is well established, with impressive performances in Desert Storm and Bosnia. The Apache Longbow continues that legacy by demonstrating overwhelming dominance in initial operational test and evaluation, as well as in Task Force XXI exercises where the after action report stated it was "employed



with devastating effect," and was "the most lethal killer in the exercise." Two recent demonstrations verified Longbow's expanded role.

This past summer, Apache participated in a demonstration with the Hunter UAV at Fort Huachuca, AZ. The Apache co-pilot controlled the Hunter system while performing his normal duties. Using the Hunter as an early-warning system, a route was cleared for the Apache to an observa-

tion point. The Apache was able to locate and identify targets up to 30 kilometers away in concert with the Hunter.

In September, a Longbow participated in the Joint Expeditionary Force Experiment, demonstrating warfighting capabilities with the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) aircraft. The Apache was able to transmit priority fire zones with key targeting information, with the JSTARS targeting cell able to reassign targets with near-real-time accuracy. Communication was through digital link while achieving frequency-hopping security. Full situational awareness relative to mission graphics and threat arrays was also achieved. When coupled with the reconnaissance capabilities of the Comanche in the objective force, this combined reconnaissance and attack capability will be impressive.

The UH-60 BLACK HAWK continues to fulfill the Army's utility requirements for air assault and air movement, command and control, and combat service support. As the primary air vehicle to move ground forces throughout the area of influence, it underscores the tactical agility required by the commander to shift forces rapidly throughout the battlespace.

The CH-47F heavy lift cargo helicopter will extend the capability of the interim force for air movement, mass casualty evacuation, aerial recovery, and aerial resupply. As a force multiplier, it will provide the commander with the ability to project air and dismounted ground forces to difficult terrain while deploying over greater distances.

The Future Transport Rotorcraft will be developed to fulfill the heavy lift requirement for the objective force, capable of significantly greater range and payloads than the CH-47F. It will meet the transport needs of the Future Combat Systems and provide the means to accomplish future operational and tactical deep missions.

Army aviation will undergo an organizational modernization to meet its future mission requirements. Current legacy organizations will be restructured into multifunctional aviation battalions (MFBs). Each MFB will contain a balanced blend of reconnaissance, attack, and lift assets. This multifunctional force structure emphasizes organizational flexibility through rapid task organizing.

In assessing the Army's transformation to a strategically responsive and dominant force, it is evident that aviation's exploitation of the third dimension of operations will give our commanders options and advantages for overwhelming dominance within the future battlespace. Clearly, Army aviation will play a central role in the Army's future.

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